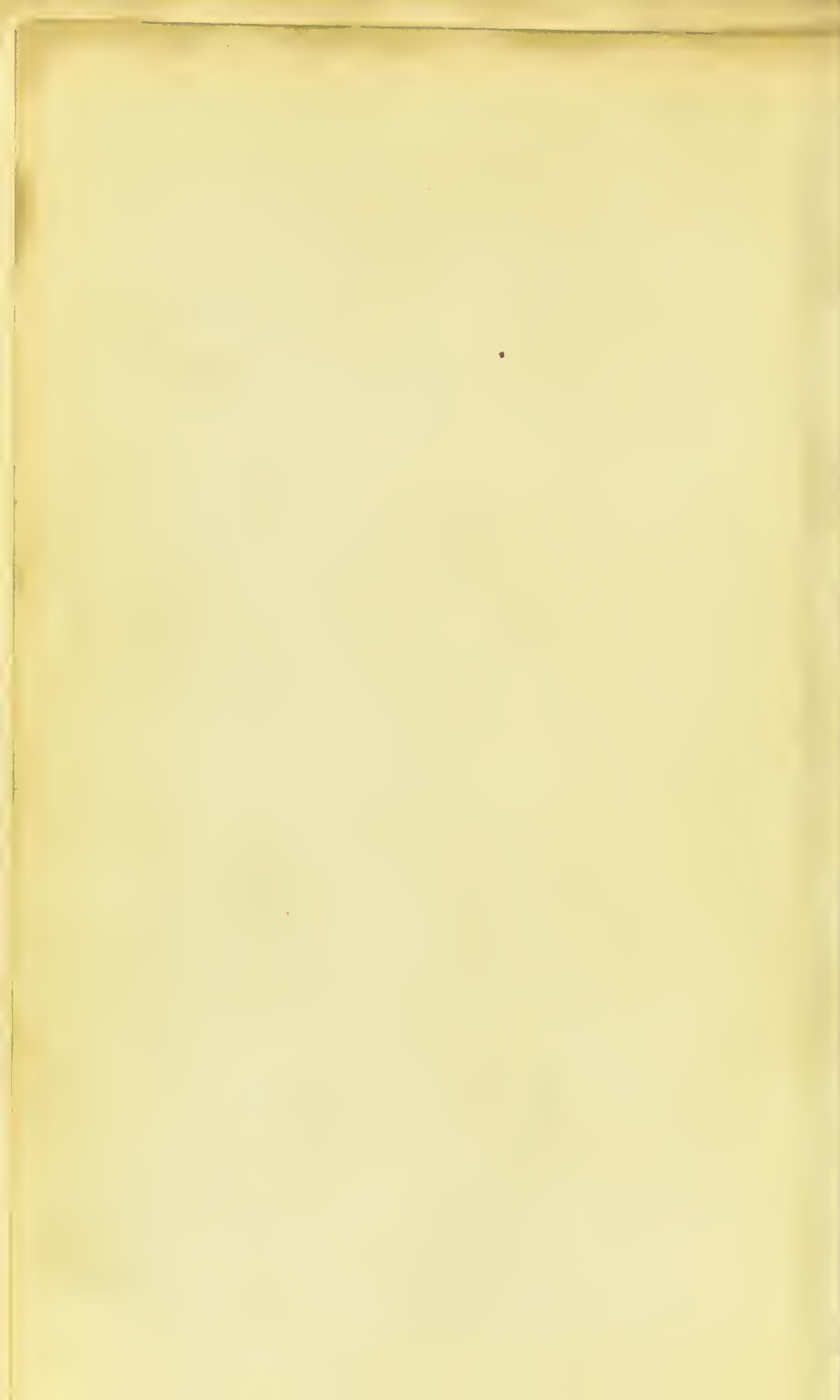






To the Honorable
Anglo-American
Commissioners of the
14th of June 1850
Under the Seal of the
Hon. Pigeon & Seal of the
United States
Whitlock 1850
and in the presence
of the Hon. Pigeon & Seal
and with the Seal of the
United States
Sealed in the presence
of the Hon. Pigeon & Seal



FUTURITY.

PUBLISHED

IN AID OF THE FUNDS

OF THE

ROYAL BERKSHIRE HOSPITAL.

BY WM. MERRY, ESQ.

“ And as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.”
— *Goldsmith.*

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P R E F A C E .

GREAT has been the difficulty in the author's mind, as to the propriety of affixing his name to a dissertation of this nature. In thus embodying, during the leisure of the past summer, the thoughts of years, he found encouragement as he proceeded, in the determination, at least, of concealment, in the event of publication. He persuaded himself that his being a layman rendered less *needful*, and that humility *forbade*, his being made known to the public. But on mature reflection there seemed reason to fear that, eloaded under excuses apparently good, there might lurk vanity rather than humility; pride shrinking from criticism. He remembered also, that much error there might unwittingly be, mingled with what had only good for its object, and that it was, therefore, important that the evil of such error, in so serious a matter, should lose all hurtful influence by being traced to its author. He dared not risk the home application of this sentence, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." He was conscious that men *do* draw back from the avowal of their religious opinions. He felt that the wish to throw the shield of secrecy round the deep convictions of his own mind, implied a want of moral courage; and he thought, finally, that it became him as a Christian soldier and gentleman, firmly to plant his colours, and by God's help to abide by them.

Shinefield, Berks, November 19th, 1839.



CHAPTER I.

“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—2 Cor. iv. 18.

FUTURITY ! how vast the range of thought that single word opens to our view. Vast, indeed, for it is without horizon. We are about to raise the calm and steadfast eye of faith and hope, through and beyond time, into eternity. Let us call to mind the Divine admonition, “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” * Let the shade of true humility be upon our brow, lest our gaze be dazzled ; and not for one moment let our right hand quit the open volume of Holy Truth, lest imagination wander. May light from that sacred page be shed upon our hearts, that reading we may learn, and as we learn believe, and believing prove, that not in vain for us has the command been given to “Search the Scriptures.” †

* Exod. iii. 5.

† John v. 39.

When we remember that the whole human race, in one constantly-flowing tide, are year by year drawing nearer towards a new state of existence which is inevitable, and will be eternal, well might enquiry into the nature of that existence, be felt to be most deeply important, even were it of remote expectation ; but when we are sensible that ere another sun goes down we ourselves may be among those summoned, and are therefore at all times on the threshold of eternity, how momentous does the interest become ! Wisely, then, may we seek to obtain as near and correct a view as is permitted of that futurity so soon to be the present. Gratefully should we rejoice if, step by step, we find the prospect before us increasing in beauty and majesty as we proceed. And full of comfort, of consolation, and encouragement, will it be, should we perceive the apprehension of death grow hourly more faint, and his certain approach become welcome rather than fearful, as the sublime hopes and promises of immortality and happiness increase in strength and earnestness.

Will it be said that such study is beyond man's understanding ? Here is the answer,—“ It is the “ privilege and distinguishing character of a rational

“being to be able to look forward into futurity, and
 “to consider his actions not only with respect to the
 “present advantage or disadvantage arising from them,
 “but to view them in their consequences through all
 “the parts of time in which himself may possibly
 “exist. If, therefore, we value the privilege of being
 “reasonable creatures, the only way to preserve it is
 “to make use of it; and by extending our views into
 “all the scenes of futurity in which we ourselves
 “must bear a part, to lay the foundation of solid and
 “durable happiness.” *

I address myself to believers. To the infidel I
 would briefly write, but in characters of living fire,
 if it were possible. “Nay, but, O man, who art thou
 “that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed
 “say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me
 “thus?” † “Shall the clay say to Him that fashion-
 “eth it, what makest thou? Woe unto him that
 “striveth with his Maker!” ‡ Can everlasting truth
 be made *untruth* by thine unbelief? Does the light
 cease to be light because the blind man says “I see
 not?” Thou preferest to be as the beasts that perish;
 the option is not given thee. It might please thee to

* Sherlock.

† Rom. ix. 20.

‡ Isa. xiv. 9.

forego the possibility of happiness so thou escape the possibility of punishment ; but the body only can die ; thy soul *must* live, whether thou wouldst have it so or not. Oh ! choose then, for thou canst (Deut. xxx. 19), while there is time, between lasting peace and endless anguish : the anguish of *comprehending too late* the mercy thou hast despised, the glorious state of being thou hast thrown from thee !

Now to ourselves. As christians, we acknowledge our position on earth to be that of pilgrims, journeying, as the children of Israel journeyed, by a prolonged wandering through the desert, to their promised land. That this our mortal state is the preliminary condition of immortality, even as the humble chrysalis is that of a creature about to become full of life and beauty : that our present existence is one in which we are not to look for happiness, because this is not our abiding place, but for trial rather, because only by trial can faith in God's promises be shewn. But we are assured of the Divine assistance of His Holy Spirit (Luke chap. xi. 13), if truly sought : that we shall not be tried beyond our strength (1. Cor. 10. 13) ; and that everlasting happiness will be the reward of steadfast faith in our Redeemer, and cheerful

obedience in proof of that faith. We are made reasonable beings that we may duly understand all this ; and have received from time to time all needful instruction from the prophets, from divine lips and example, and from the apostles. Knowing all these things, we profess to think of this world only as a preparation for a better, and to rejoice in the blessed hope before us.

And here a question arises :—

Do we rejoice in this blessed hope ?

You, under whose eye this enquiry falls, I ask you to pause, and with “ wandering thoughts called home,” to put to yourself the question, “ What is my precise and definite belief as to a future state of existence, and in what degree do I find present thoughts and actions influenced thereby ?”

Will it be denied by any, whose years and experience have taught them to weigh well their own thoughts, or those of others, that Christians there are, so called, who may be said to submit, to be *resigned to*, rather than to believe, and *hope for* eternal life ? The proof being, that, if in their power, they would postpone the hour of death indefinitely, as they do the thoughts of

it, and live on here, in sickness and sorrow, and under all the privations of age and infirmity, *anything, rather than die!*

If this be so, should it be so? And wherefore is it so? The answer must come from divine truth. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isaiah i, 3.) How striking are these words, and how true the picture! Animal instinct leading the beasts of the field to know the hand that feeds them; while man in the pride of reason unwillingly recognizes even a Creator and Benefactor.

Why else is it, that so heartily in earnest in temporal engagements, pleasures of a day, or but the hour even, and while confessing *anticipation* to be often of more worth than reality, the most sublime anticipation of all, the reality of which cannot fall short of expectation, finds no room in our minds, and exercises no cheering influence in our hearts? Who has not some object in prospect to which distance lends its enchantment? The ladder of ambition to be climbed in public life; the marrying and giving in marriage; the meeting of long absent friends; the thousand pleasant

dreams of social life, rarely realized, but full of glowing hope, and earnest feeling. To these, our earthly objects, with what anxiety, what pleasure do we look forward. Do we trace in our minds the same "pleasing hope, the fond desire, the longing after immortality?" Do we feel through all the clouds of earth and earthly feelings, the settled sunshine of heaven in our hearts? No doubt there are those who do—yet, are they the few or the many? And why should not all, seeing that the gracious promises of God are made equally to all, without distinction of persons, on the sole condition of love to Him, shewn, as it only can be shewn, by obedience to His will, and faith in the all sufficient atonement of our blessed Saviour. It would seem to follow, that such promises are either not understood, or not regarded. Can they be disregarded?

Let it be our present object, therefore, to consider what these promises are, and with this purpose, examine those texts of holy scripture which appear more particularly to have reference to a future state, and which have here been brought together under one view. It is a body of evidence which will richly repay our fixed and devoted attention.

Turning first to the Gospel of Saint Matthew we read :

- Matt. v. 3. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for *their's* is the kingdom of heaven.”
8. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for *they* shall see God.”*
10. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake : for *their's* is the kingdom of Heaven.”
- 10, 11. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall

* Difficult indeed is it for finite minds to comprehend, even remotely, the happiness involved in this promise, for “no man hath seen God at any time.” We can but approach its conception through the imperfect medium of earthly feelings, but these may teach us something. The holy psalmist has written, “My soul thirsteth for God, the living God.” “Like as the hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God! “My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God ; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God.” (Ps. xlii.) And even among the less gifted of mankind, what heart is a stranger to some paramount affection, some earnest and longing desire to see, and intense happiness in seeing one fellow being at least, in the sphere of our social relations? And may we not reason thus, that by as much as the boundless love and perfection of our Heavenly Father and Creator are necessarily and immeasurably above those of the best among His creatures, *by so much* must the happiness conveyed in the expression of seeing God, be transeendantly beyond anything within the range of human experience, and therefore, also, by so much the more to be desired, and looked forward to.

- Matt. v. 11. 12. say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for *great is your reward in heaven.*"
19. "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the *least in the kingdom of heaven* : but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called *great* in the kingdom of heaven."
- vi. 4. 6. 18. "Thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."
20. "Lay up for yourselves treasures *in heaven.*"
- vii. 2. "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged : and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you."
11. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much* more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him."
21. "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but *he that doeth the will* of my Father which is in heaven."

Matt. ix. 13. "Go ye and learn what that meaneth,
 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice:'
 (Hosca vi. 6) for I am not come to call
 the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

29. *According to your faith be it unto
 you."*

x. 32. "Whosoever shall confess me before men,
 him will I confess also before my Father
 which is in heaven."

40 to 42. "He that receiveth you receiveth me,
 and he that receiveth me receiveth Him
 that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet
 in the name of a prophet *shall receive
 a prophet's reward*; and he that re-
 ceiveth a righteous man in the name of
 a righteous man, *shall receive a righteous
 man's reward*. And whosoever shall give
 to drink unto one of these little ones a cup
 of cold water only in the name of a disci-
 ple, verily I say unto you, *he shall in no
 wise lose his reward*." (See also Mark
 9. 41.)

xi. 28 to 30. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and
 are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*.
 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ;
 for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and

Mat. xi. 28 to 30 *ye shall find rest unto your souls.* For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

xii. 20. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench."

31 32. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come,"

35 to 37. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things ; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

49 50 "And He stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren ! For

Matt. xi. 49 50 *whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.'*

xiii. 38 to 43. "The field is the world : the good seed are the children of the kingdom ; but the tares are the children of the wicked one ; the enemy that sowed them is the devil ; the harvest is the end of the world ; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire ; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity ; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire ; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*

45, 46. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls : who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

47 to 49. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and

Matt. xiii. 26, gathered of every kind : which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world ; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just."

xvi. 26, 27. What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels ; and then *He shall reward every man according to his works.*

xviii. 1 to 5. " At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Who-soever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall

receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."

Mat. xviii., 10. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in
xxii. 30. heaven."* "In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage,

* On this verse Bishop Porteus has the following beautiful remark, which cannot be out of place here. "One thing is most clearly "proved," he observes, "by this text, as it is confirmed by a multitude of others, namely, the doctrine not only of a general but of a "particular providence, which, either by ministering angels, or by "the all-comprehending, and omnipotent eye of God himself, watches "over those true disciples of Christ, who approach most nearly to "the humility, the meekness, the innocence, and the simplicity of a "child." It may be added, that whoever would deny this proposition should be prepared to shew, at what period of after life, the angel permitted to watch over our infancy withdraws his care. Is it during the strong temptations of early youth, or amid the trials of manhood, that such care is less needful? Is the helpless, but mortal body, of the child, of more worth than the not less weak and erring, but immortal soul of the man? *When do we cease to be dependant, utterly dependant, on the Creator and Preserver of all mankind?* It may be conceived, that the more we succumb to the evil temptings of our great arch enemy, the more faint may become the counter-acting influence of a heavenly spirit, but one is reluctant to believe a ministering watchfulness so benign, so needed, is entirely lost at any period of our lives.

but are *as the angels of God in heaven.*"

Mat. xxii. 31, 32. "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

xxv. 34. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

46. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Mark. "The same instruction in very similar words will be found in this gospel, and is therefore not repeated here.

Luke vi. 20, "Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God."

23. "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven."

35. "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and *your reward shall be great*, and ye shall be the children of the highest."

Luke vi. 36 to 38. "Be ye merciful as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged : condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned : forgive, and ye shall be forgiven : give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. With the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured unto you again."

vii. 28. "For I say unto you, among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist : but he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he."

ix. 26 "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels."

xii. 8. "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God."

32. "Fear not, little flock ; for *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*"

Luke xiv. 14. "Thou shalt be reeompensed at the resurrection of the just."

xv. 7. "Joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentancee."

10. "There is joy in the presenee of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

xx. 35 to 36. "They which shall be aecounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for *they are equal unto the angels*; and are the echildren of God being the echildren of the resurrection."

xxiii. 43. "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

John iii. 13. "No man hath ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man."

15. "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

John iii. 16, 17. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

18. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

36. "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*"

v. 24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life ; and shall not come into condemnation : but is passed from death unto life.*"

28, 29. "Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good,

John v., 28, 29. unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

vi. 35. " And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

37. " Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

40. " And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life ; and I will raise him up at the last day."*

viii. 51. " Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."

x. 14. " I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine."

* " And Thomas answered and said unto Him, my Lord and my God ! Jesus saith to him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed : *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*"—JOHN xx. 28.

- John x. 15. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father : and I lay down My life for the sheep."
- 27, 28. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me : and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand."
29. "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all ; and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."
30. "*I and my Father are one.*"
- xi. 21, 23 to 26. "Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. Jesus saith unto her, thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."
- John xii, 26. "Where I am, there shall also My servant be : if any man serve Me, him will my Father honor."

John xiv. 1 to 3. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; *that where I am, there ye may be also.*

xvii. 11. "And now I (Jesus Christ) am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are."

20, 21. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us."

xvii. 24. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Rom. ii. 6 to 10. "God will render to every man according to his deeds : to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life : but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good."

11. "There is no respect of persons with God."

v. 1. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

6. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

7 to 9. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

16, 17. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

18. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

viii. 19. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

21. "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

26 "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we

Rom. viii. 26. should pray for as we ought: but the spirit itself maketh intercession for us."

32 "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things."

x. 9 "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*"

The first Epistle to the Corinthians.

1. Cor. ii. 9. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

xv. 22. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

35 to 55, 57, 58 "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou

* Examine 12th and following chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in connexion with this promise.

1 Cor. xv. 35 to sowest not that body that shall be, but
 55, 57, 58. bare grain, (it may chance of wheat or
 of some other grain :) but God giveth it
 a body as it hath pleased Him, and to
 every seed his own body. All flesh is
 not the same flesh, but there is one kind
 of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts,
 another of fishes, and another of birds.
 There are also celestial bodies, and
 bodies terrestrial ; but the glory of the
 celestial is one, and the glory of the ter-
 restrial is another. There is one glory
 of the sun, and another glory of the
 moon, and another glory of the stars :
 for one star differeth from another star
 in glory. So also is the resurrection of
 the dead. It is sown in corruption ; it
 raised in incorruption : it is sown in
 dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is
 sown in weakness ; it is raised in power :
 it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a
 spiritual body. There is a natural body,
 and there is a spiritual body. And so
 it is written, The first man Adam was
 made a living soul ; the last Adam was

1 Cor. xv. 35 to
55, 57, 58.

made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural : and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy : the second man is the Lord from Heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy : and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God ; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

“ Behold I shew you a mystery ; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption,

1 Cor. xv. 35 to 55, 57, 58, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass, the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

2 Cor. iii. 18. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from 'glory to glory.' "*"

iv. 17, 18. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are

* An Hebraism, denoting a continued succession and increase of glory.

2 Cor. iv. 18. not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

v. 10. " We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Epistle to the Philippians.

Phil. i, 21, 23 24. " For me to live is Christ and to die is *gain*. I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; *which is far better* : nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

iii. 21. " Who (Christ) shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."

First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

Thess. iv. 15 to 18 " For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (be before) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall

Thess. iv. 15 to 18. descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

2 Tim. iv. 8. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Tit. iii. 7. "That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Jam. i. 12. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

1 Peter i. 3 to 5. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us

- 1 Peter i. 3 to 5. again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
- 2 Peter i. 4. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."
- iii. 10 to 14. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. Nevertheless we, *according to His promise*, look for new heavens and a new

2 Peter, iii. 14. earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

1 Ep. John ii. 25. "And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life."

28. "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him."

iii. 1, 2. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

Rev. ii. 7. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

28. "And I will give him the morning star."

- iii. 5. "He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels."
- xiv. 13. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

It would be presumptuous in any to determine, as of authority, in what sense the latter part of Revelation, on what is called the Millenium, may be received, and it is therefore omitted here.

Let not the blind lead the blind.

CHAPTER II.

"Oh Death ! Oh crowned Death ! Pale-steeded Death !
Whose name doth make our respiration brief.

* * * * *
Thou of the shrouded face which to have seen
Is to be very awful, like thyself.
Thou whom all flesh shall see. Thou whose dread call
Changeth all beauty into what we fear,
Changeth all glory into what we tread,
Genius to silence, wrath to nothingness,
And love——not love !——thou hast no change for love !
* * * * *

Mine heart is armed not in panoply
Of the old Roman iron, nor assumes
The Stoic valour. 'Tis a human heart,
And so confesses with a human fear,
That only for the hope the cross inspires—
That only for the man who died, and lives,
'Twould crouch beneath thy sceptre's royalty,
With faintness of the pulse, and backward cling
To life. But knowing what I soothly know,
High-seeming Death, I dare thee ! and have hope,
In God's good time, of showing to thy face,
An unsuccumbing spirit, which sublime
May cast away the low anxieties
That wait upon the flesh,
And enter that eternity to come
Where live the dead, and only Death can die."

ELIZABETH BARRETT. *

"There are multitudes who pronounce a man a visionary, who speaks distinctly and joyfully of his future being, and of the triumph of the mind over bodily decay."—CHANNING, D. D.

"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech."—2 Cor. iii. 12.

* Translator of the "Prometheus Bound," and author of the "Seraphim," etc.

In the foregoing chapter we have before us, like a stream of light and life, the chief passages in the New Testament, which open to our view that state of existence to which we are all hourly drawing nearer ; to which all are invited ; and in which all have the power of securing to themselves, through the mercy of our blessed Redeemer, happiness to all eternity ; happiness such as “ EYE HATH NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HATH ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN ” TO CONCEIVE ; where “ TEARS ARE WIPED FROM EVERY EYE, AND THERE SHALL BE NO MORE DEATH, NEITHER SORROW NOR CRYING, NEITHER SHALL THERE BE ANY MORE PAIN ; ” where “ SIN AND SORROW ENTER NOT ; ” where “ THE WICKED CEASE FROM TROUBLING AND THE WEARY ARE AT REST ; ” where “ THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN ; ” shall be “ PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE ; ” shall be “ AS THE ANGELS ; ” shall be “ EQUAL TO THE ANGELS , ” and man’s “ EARTHY IMAGE CHANGED TO A HEAVENLY IMAGE ; ” and his “ VILE BODY FASHIONED LIKE CHRIST’S GLORIOUS BODY . ”

And is it from contemplation like this, lofty, ennobling, spirit-stirring, as it is, that men draw back ? Can it be that, quick of apprehension, wise in their

generation as children of this world, on matters relating to temporal interest, we are dull and insensible and apathetic, only when the interests of eternity are in question? That having eyes to see, in vain shines for us the light thrown upon a future world by the holy gospel; in vain so glorious a beacon is held out, which should cheer, as well as illumine our path like the pillar of fire, which in old time guided the wanderings of the Israelites.

Must we admit, that minds there are, choked by "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches," which would turn from heaven itself, and with a clinging love of earth, would fain live over again the years they have passed, chequered as those years have probably been, with many follies if not much vice, many hours, thoughts, and actions, rather to be repented of than repeated; postponing always that consideration for the future, in which there is present and practical wisdom, as teaching the soul to soar hopefully and buoyantly through trials and afflictions that are common to all.

Let it not be supposed that a vain, a dreamy and imaginative disposition of mind is advocated. This

would be a strange perversion of reason, for reason honestly consulted would shew, that meditation on our future condition as immortal beings, cannot fail to bring with it a sense of the deepest gratitude and admiration, humility and love, towards the fountain of all goodness. Such feeling, by a natural consequence, would lead us to take heed to our ways lest in anything we offend, One, to whom we have so little to offer. The best emotions of the heart would be His. Love towards God would, again, as a consequence, create love to our neighbour, *because* it is His known desire; and such love is the fulfilling of the law, *because* "love worketh no ill to his neighbour," but breathes "peace, good will towards man." Such love is the charity that "suffereth long, and is kind, that envieth not, and is not puffed up, which rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." * Love and charity are one

If, indeed, the disinclination to look forward to eternity arose, truly, from a sense of our own inability to merit so great a reward, the plea—apparently that of humility (an inseparable ingredient of the Christian mind), would be, in fact,

* 1 Corinthians xiii.

one implying chiefly a want of reflection. For where is it written that man's merit may win the prize of our High calling? "Not unto us O Lord, not unto us but unto THEY name give the praise."* "The wages of sin is death, but the *gift* of God is eternal life."† In the merit and expiation of our blessed Redeemer alone, is man's hope, and strength, and trust. That gracious Being, Who, one with the Father before all worlds as God, was born in the world as man, taking upon Himself our nature, and being "in all points tempted as we are," that He might be an example of all righteousness as He is the propitiation for all sins, in that He laid down His life for us. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."‡ Rightly do we believe ourselves unprofitable servants, for thus is it written—"So likewise ye *when ye shall have done all those things that are commanded* of you, say, we are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our *duty* to do."|| And truly it needs but a moment's thought to satisfy us, that to deserve, as of a right, or to be other than unprofitable servants, is

* Psa. cxv. † Rom. vi. 23. ‡ Acts iv. 12. || Luke xvii 10.

impossible. Look abroad upon the earth, and consider its wonders, animate and inanimate. Then let us lift our eyes above and survey the heavens; the world of stars—stars themselves worlds. Let the telescope aid us to extend our vision, and while thus viewing as it were a new creation, let us remember *how much still remains unseen*. Let the microscope unfold to our observation fresh wonders; and then, if the mind be not stunned by facts so overwhelming, let us endeavour to bring home to our conception, that all we behold is the creation of one Supreme Being.

“These are Thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty, Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair, *Thyself, how wondrous then!*
Unspeakable.”—*Milton*.

Profitable servants to such a Being! Oh no! Let no tinge of vain glory or self-righteousness stain the mind of Christian man striving to obey his Creator and Benefactor. Not one holy aspiration, one wish to do right, followed by earnest and honest endeavour to fulfil that wish, is lost upon Him to whom all *hearts* are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; our Saviour Himself has declared, that whosoever shall give a cup of cold water, only, in His name, shall in no wise lose

his reward : but every kindly act for the succour and welfare of our fellow-men, must have a clear, distinct, and specific object to render it of value. It must be done for the "honor and glory of God;" in obedience to His will, not for the praise of man. We should be "always abounding in the work of the Lord."* Why? As the only *proof* we can give of our love and faith and sincerity : AS SUCH,—as the best and sole testimony in our power to offer that we are in earnest,—our patient continuance in well doing is acceptable to God. "The Lord ordereth a good man's going, and maketh his way acceptable to Himself."† Always, however, must it be true, that unprofitable servants we remain, because He who said "Let there be light, and there was light," cannot *need* the puny arm of man to execute His will, let that will be what it may.

Thus much, supposing the plea of conscious unworthiness an *honest* plea. But is it honest? Is it not, rather, one more proof "that the heart is deceitful above all things,"‡ and forgetting that "God is not mocked;" that He is a "Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

† Ps. xxxvii.

‡ Jer. xvii. 9.

naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do ;”* forgetting this, do we not deceive ourselves even to the extent of supposing we can thereby deceive God ? Do we not gloss over, under the plea of such “unworthiness,” the fact of *our own apathy* or *disinclination* really to answer to ourselves the question whether, while vaguely hoping for God’s mercy, we are living according to the covenanted conditions on which only that mercy is promised ? May it not rather be said that *man compares himself with man*, instead of applying to his heart the test of divine precept ; that he is habitually satisfied in thinking himself “as good as his neighbour,” fearful, if anything, of being righteous overmuch, if he exceed such standard of perfection ; and that the still small voice of conscience is lulled from time to time, with the resolution indefinitely postponed, to hear more of “righteousness and temperance and judgment to come,” like Felix, at a “convenient season.”†

“Thou fool, this night thy soul (may) be required of thee.”—*Luke* xii. 20.

* Heb. iv. 13.

† And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will send for thee.—*Acts* xxiv. 25.

If there are those to whom the body of texts here given appears insufficient to satisfy the mind on many anxious points, to them I would say, what the known mercy and goodness of God render unquestionable, that more knowledge would have been given had it been essential or beneficial for us. "If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not—how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things."* But there are the Scriptures before us, and we are *expected* to study divine law with at least the same care and attention we bestow on the words, phrases, and meanings of human law.

Take for example on this point, our Saviour's reproach to that sect of the Jews who, receiving the Books of Moses as Divine authority, refused to understand them as conveying a promise of life to come. "The same day came to Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection." They imagine the case of a woman dying after having had seven husbands, and already triumphing in the supposition that the difficulty was unanswerable, they enquire, "In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven?"

* John iii. 12.

The answer they assumed to be impossible, was found to their shame and conviction in one of those very books on which they professed to rely: and they are taught that the text “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,”* shewed Abraham and the Patriarchs to be *then existing*, and therefore to have risen from the dead.—See *Matthew* xxii. 23, *Mark* xii. 18, *Luke* xx. 27.

Hence, then, it is clear that the Jews were expected to mark the difference (and deduce a most important inference) between a present and past tense, “I AM the God of Abraham,” are the words of the text, not I WAS.

Again have we a lesson to the same purport, in the question put by our Saviour to the Pharisees,† “What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? They say unto Him, the Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David, in spirit, call Him Lord, saying, *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou on my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool*?‡ *If David then call Him Lord, how is He*

* Exod. iii. 6.

† Matt. xxii. 42.

‡ Ps. cx.

his Son ?" "No man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions ."*

With these examples before us, impressively shewing the earnest and fixed attention due to the study of Holy Scripture, let us not dare to complain, that the information we seek is not given, until we have first braced our minds to the task of carefully examining, and then humbly "pondering in our hearts," such instruction as we already have ; and thus also may we learn "therewith to be content."

In this spirit let us now proceed.

"That the dead *are* raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."† These are our Saviour's words. They were mercifully intended to enlighten the Sadducees, and not less may we find in them, application to ourselves, and the subject before us. They answer an enquiry of unspeakable interest, arising out of that

* Matt. xxii. 46.

† Luke xx. 37.

very text. What becomes of man's spirit when no longer animating its mortal frame ?

THE SPIRIT LIVES ! Abraham and his descendants who had died and were buried, *still lived* ; God was still their God, and so declared to be *because* He is not the God of the dead, but of *the living*. If thus explicitly enlightened as to a fact so solemn, a fact believed by philosophic minds, before our Saviour's appearance on earth,* but the confirmation of which we owe to Revelation, we next seek to know *in what*

* It is always an inquiry full of interest, to ascertain what have been the religious opinions of different nations and times ; and those of my readers, who are unacquainted with classical authors, may wish to be informed, that, although there exist no ancient writings approaching, even by many hundred years, the antiquity of the Bible, we know that 400 years previously, down almost to the commencement of the Christian era ; that is, from the age of Soerates, to that of Cicero, (omitting all uncertain mention of Pythagoras, a century earlier,) the immortality of the soul, and its happiness or misery after death, were reasoned upon and maintained. Soerates, when condemned to death by the thirty tyrants of Athens, for " not acknowledging the gods which the state acknowledged," and for " introducing new divinities," passed his last moments in calm and confident argument with his friends, respecting the nature of the new and immortal existence about to open to him. " I should be inexcusable," he observed, " in despising death, if I were not persuaded that it will conduct me into the society of great and good men ;" and in reply to the question of his friend Crito, as to his burial, he says, " is it not strange, after all that I have said to convince you, that I am going to the society of the happy, that Crito still thinks that this body, which will soon be a lifeless corpse, is Soerates ? Let him dispose of my body as he

manner the spirit lives : let us first observe, that human knowledge on the subject may be expressed in these brief words, “ The souls of the just are already in the hands of God, and it is certain that their bodies will be raised, and again united to them by His Almighty power.”—*Dr. Hammond.*

Now it is to the first part of this sentence, “ The souls of the just are already in the hands of God,” that I would invite consideration, for I cannot but think, that much of the reluctance with which man-

pleases, but let him not mourn over it as if it were Soerates.” So likewise, and in the same strain, does Cicero speak of death, as the *glorious day* when he shall go into the great assembly of spirits, and shall be gathered to the best and bravest of mankind who have died before him.

That the human mind should thus have arrived by philosophical deduction, assisted probably by tradition, however faint and remote, gathered from the Egyptians and running back centuries to Patriarchal origin, is not here brought forward, as an evidence of truth ; but as showing how gratefully sensible we should be, of the inestimable advantage enjoyed by the Christian over the Heathen world. That prospect of futurity, which was dimly perceived, and by the most learned only, the master minds of the Grecian and Roman empires, is in this our day brought home with joyful certainty, to the cottage door of the humblest and the poorest.

Their philosophy which Plato, and after him, Cicero, define to be “ *Scientia rerum Divinarum et humanarum cum causis,*” was a well conceived and pleasing hypothesis ; but vouchsafed to us are immutable truths, established on the sure evidence of the Bible, and which are open to all who have ears to hear, the unlearned and the learned.

kind look forward to death, arises from want of reflection, a too-undefined belief, a vague apprehension, as to the state of our released spirit.

Had we no other guide than our own imperfect power of reasoning, we might, even thus, arrive at a calm conviction, that the Creator of the universe, whose mercy is over all His works, whether those works are a system of starry worlds, all revolving according to the law of a master-hand, or the minutest insect invisible to the naked eye, but cared for in its formation not the less marvellously, would not leave man's immortal spirit "to be imprisoned in the viewless winds," or to wander, without object or destination, round the precincts of that grave, which contains the decaying form it once animated. We might be firmly assured, that while the body is resolving itself into its original dust, awaiting the day of its resurrection, the far more important and essential part of man, his soul, which cannot die, is not without its appointed home in a new state of existence, when its allotted career on earth is accomplished. And as regards the nature of that appointed home, may not human reason go yet farther, without presumption, on a subject of such momentous interest, and say, shall He

to whom a thousand years are as yesterday, and from whom no secrets are hid, shall He not judge wisely and mercifully for us at the hour of death, as in the great day of judgment, when all things are finished?

But the human mind is *not* left to exhaust itself in conjecture. Blessed be God, we have the sacred volume before us, and open to all of us, wherein we may seek the wisdom our better spirit craves. Not carelessly will we assume authority where it does not exist. The duty expected of us in weighing well, and with the full powers of the mind, and in teachable spirit, the truths laid open to us in the Bible, has already been shown. Let us now in like manner remember, that indifference to instruction given, is not more reprehensible, than the awful presumption, by which a single text is sometimes wrested to a purpose, and passages are separated from their context, so as to assume a partial meaning, however contrary to the general harmony and design of divine precept. Those, for instance, which would excuse the necessity of works, as the *inseparable* result of Christian faith, forgetting that "*by its fruits* is the good tree known,"* and unmindful of Him who has said, "If ye love Me,

* See also Matt. xxiii. 23.

keep my commandments." "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, *but he that doeth the will* of my Father which is in Heaven."* "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."†

Thus cautioned, let us consult, first, St. Luke xxiii. 43: "Lord remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom," (said unto Jesus, the penitent malefactor on the cross); "And Jesus said unto him, '*Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!*'" It has been properly remarked by learned authority that the phrase "*μετ' ἐμὲ εἶσθι*," thou shalt be *with me*, implies an invitation such as that of a *guest* to an entertainment.

What may this mean? What must mean so direct and clear a promise? How read ye? To me it reads as a plain, simple, hopeful, blessed truth, not applicable to the individual sinner only, nor having peculiar reference to times or persons, but conveying *to all*, two distinct and important facts. First, that our departed spirit at once and immediately,—"*To-day*,"—enters into its new state

* Matt. vii. 21.

† James ii. 26.

of existence ; is carried to its destination, as Lazarus at his death, was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And, secondly, that such state of existence, such destination of the soul, is the result of, and determined by, God's foreknowledge or judgment, at the moment that earth ceases to be our dwelling place.

This is the unavoidable conclusion to be drawn from our Saviour's use of the word "Paradise," which in those days was understood to be the happy abode of departed spirits, contradistinguished from a place of punishment. And be it not forgotten that our Lord's instruction was always adapted to the understanding of His hearers in a remarkable degree.

Men to whom we look up, at the present day, as authority, on account of their learning and piety, concur in the same view of Paradise. "It is the region appropriated to good souls," writes Dr. Hales. The learned Parkhurst observes, that "Paradise is the blessed state of faithful souls between death and the resurrection. Such is the sense of Paradise in the New Testament." Dr. Whitby remarks—"Our Saviour must have used the word Paradise in the sense in which the Jews understood it, the place of

happiness into which pious souls, when separated from the body, are immediately received." Hear also Bishop Horsley—"Of this place (Paradise) we know little, except that to those who die in the Lord it is a place of comfort and rest; not a Paradise of eternal sleep and senselessness, but a place of happy rest and tranquil hope."* That the humble and penitent

* It will not be thought a digression, nor irrelevant to the general argument of the subject before us, in which the love and mercy of God are called to mind as the leading inducements to present rectitude and future hope, rather than the fear of punishment; if one more lesson be remarked upon as belonging to our Saviour's reply to the penitent malefactor. Those who are walking in the path and in the station in which it has pleased God to place them, and that station a happy one, with reference to the means of early instruction, and the habits and example of those around them, would find it difficult to imagine, without much observation and inquiry, the awful difference in the career of life, resulting from the circumstances of parentage, education, and companionship. Strange as it may seem in a Christian country, there are those who, from childhood to the close of their days, have known as little of their Saviour as the malefactor on the cross, and in whose ears the precepts of vice—not of virtue, have been the uniform instruction. Again, there are those; who, more fortunate in their means of knowledge, have made a most unfortunate use of those means; crime being equally the prominent feature in either case. Many have forfeited life or liberty for sinful actions, of which sinfulness they had no *moral* sense; and many better taught, have sunk under temptation to which we ourselves might, possibly, have yielded, if similarly tried. While therefore "he who thinketh he standeth," may well "take heed, lest he fall," and retaining his abhorrence of sin, refrain from judging others whom God only can truly judge; we may draw from our Saviour's mercy to the malefactor this important truth, that neither ignorance nor guilt are doomed to *despair*, where penitence is real; at the same time remarking, that the example thus set before us, is given as a solitary case lest we should *presume*.

thief on the cross should at once commence his spiritual state of existence, depends not on this text alone, but is in perfect harmony, it will be recollected, with our Saviour's previous declaration as to the Patriarchs. (Page 48.) Let us next turn to the Gospel of St. John, chap. v. 24, wherein it is thus written, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and *shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.*"* Again also in the eleventh chapter, we find the beautiful and affecting, and most instructive passage, of the death of Lazarus. "Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." "Jesus saith unto her, thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, *I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day.*" Observe well these

* I am aware that the words "passed from death unto life," especially taken in conjunction with 1 Ep. John iii. 14, must be understood to mean, the being passed from the darkness of ignorance, to the light and knowledge of the gospel. The passage appears to me to signify, not only the *present justification* of the believer, accepted in Christ, but also that his soul at the hour of death remains not a moment under the power and bondage of the grave, but passes at once from an earthly to a spiritual existence.

words, for herein is the whole question of immediate, or suspended consciousness of existence after death, brought before our Saviour Himself. Martha believed that her brother, after the long sleep of the grave, as she understood it, should rise "at the resurrection in the last day." And there seems even a tone of impatient grief, a "refusing to be comforted," by consolation so remote in imagination. Our Saviour's mild and gracious reply is, "*I am the resurrection and the life* : he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

An answer how full of intense interest and comfort, not less to us than to Martha. How decisive of the fact, that death hath no more dominion over us, than the momentary passage from mortality to immortality.

In the burial service of our church we say, "Almighty God, with whom do *live** the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, *are in joy and*

* See Luke 20, 38. Eccl. 12, 7. Rev. 14, 13.

felicity; we give Thee *heartly thanks* that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world." Now if the sleep of death applied to the soul as well as the body; if we imagined, that those whose presence and companionship on earth had been most dear to us, were removed by death only into a state of unconsciousness, a long solemn trance, then if the broken-hearted mourner were called upon to say Amen, to such thanksgiving, would not that Amen proceed out of "feigned lips;" remembering our own bereavement, our own utter loss without immediate advantage or gain to the being beloved? Even as it is, with the knowledge distinctly before us, that "Christ hath died, yea, rather is risen again"; (8. Rom. 44,) with the blessed assurance presented to penitent and believing man, "To day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise;" too often do we sorrow as those without hope; too intimately does self mingle unthinkingly with earthly affection; too engrossingly do we dwell upon our own deprivation, the blank in life's brief page of daily comfort rather than raise our thoughts hopefully and trustingly, to the contemplation of the vast reward, the measure of happiness so infinitely beyond our power to have contributed, which has thus become the lot of one, whose loss we incon-

sidcrately lament. Thanks be to God we shall not in this matter, nor in others, be judged by one who cannot be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities : " for " In all their affliction, He was afflicted." (Is. 63. 9.) Who does not recall, with swelling heart, the proof recorded on this point at the tomb of Lazarus,— " Jesus wept ? " * Those tears fell, as we now may easily comprehend, not for the limited cause supposed by the Jews, " Behold how He loved him." We should profit little from meditation on a Being so perfect, a passage so beautiful, if we saw only in those tears, regret for Lazarus whom he was about to restore to life, and who was restored the next moment, at the divine command from His lips—" Lazarus come forth." Far more profitably may we believe, that in the scene of distress around Him, our Saviour's pure and omniscient mind saw, at one view, the misery brought into the world by sin, and death its sad consequence ! The vista of futurity was before that all-seeing eye, and He knew that the despair of that family, was but *one* of the countless drops, that must form the ocean of human sorrow in all time to come. He knew that He could relieve affliction

* John 11. 35.

in the instance then before Him, but that for ages yet unknown, the ties of affection must be severed, and the law of God fulfil its course. He knew that His purpose on earth, in taking upon Himself our nature, was to lay down that life for our sakes; to redeem man from the eternal penalty: but God is just as well as merciful. We have sinned, and we must die—*Jesus wept that it must be so*: and precious indeed to man's heart should be those pitying tears, that divine commiseration for others' grief, not his own.

It is not with the view of accumulating proof of the immediate destination, and active state of the soul's existence after death, that I now refer to the transfiguration of our Saviour, as recorded by St. Matt. chap. 17, and St. Mark ch. 9, though applicable, but because that passage enables us to proceed to a further question, one of touching interest, that of *recognition* in such new state of being.

“Jesus was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And behold *there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.*”

Moses and Elias talking with Him! Moses and Elias must then have been alive, and of angelic appearance, for the disciples desired to raise tabernacles to *them*, as well as to our Saviour. But above all, to our present purpose, they WERE Moscs and and Elias. Not two unknown, but two *specific* persons. I cannot properly say that "Peter and James, and John his brother," the disciples present, *recognized* those whom they had never known in life, but the *identity* of Moses and Elias is declared, and that of course involves the question of recognition. Again, refer to St. Luke xvi., "and it came to pass that Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." *

This is a parable, and as such to be received, but our Saviour, the God of *truth*, adapting His lessons to the condition of those who heard Him,

* Alluding to the custom of those days, when men reclined at length, side by side at their feasts, instead of sitting. Thus, also, St. John is described as "leaning on Jesus' bosom," at the last supper.—*John* xiii. 25.

in no instance mingles those lessons with^d deceptive or impossible circumstances; on the contrary, with such only as were likely to be best understood, and most familiar to their conceptions. Here again, therefore, identity of persons and recognition after death, are presented to us as facts in the understood order of Providence.

That these are indeed facts may be clearly comprehended also from the *definite* and *distinctive* position of man in the sight of God. "Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by *thy name*." (Is. xliii, 1.) "I will not blot out his *name* out of the book of life, but I will confess *his name* before my Father and before his angels." (Rev. iii, 5.) St. Paul speaks of those "*whose names* are in the book of life." (Phil. iiii, 3.) Saint John describes those "*whose names* are not written in the book of life." (Rev. xiii, 8); and very numerous are the passages which might be cited, all tending to prove that the Christian, especially, is not an unknown cypher in a crowd—not as "the sheep upon a thousand hills," but that he will stand before God in Heaven as personally and individually known and distinguishable from his fellow beings as he now stands before God and man

on earth. The deduction is obvious ; where individuality exists, recognition is a necessary consequence. If, with our present limited faculties, men know each other after long absence, and change from youth to age, is it possible that redeemed man, with the enlarged perceptions of a higher existence, can fail to recognise the earthly friends who were the faithful solace of this life's pilgrimage ?

I will only, further, on this point, submit for your reflection the remarkable instruction given by David to those around him, who understood not why, mourning in all the bitterness of anguish for his dying child, he ceased to mourn when that child was dead." "I shall go *to him*," is the solemn reply, "but he shall not return to me."* The application of this passage of scripture to the question before us, is in the first part of this answer. The holy psalmist says not, "My child is dead, my comfort is that I shall die too ; he is in his grave, my grave also awaits me ;—but clearly and conclusively shows in the words, "I shall go *to him*," that in *that re-union* is his source of consolation ; and re-union would be without meaning, without its solace, unless implying identity and recognition.

* 2 Sam. xii.

I know not, indeed, that there may not be gleaned from the foregoing parable, a proof, not only of identity and recognition in a future state, but yet more; that in such state we do not lose our remembrance and interest in the world we have quitted. The first prayer of Dives was for mercy for himself, that Lazarus might but “dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue.” But it cannot escape remark, that his next petition was in behalf of his five brethren *still on earth*, to whom he besought that Lazarus might be sent as a warning; and whom, therefore, he had not forgotten in the midst of his own torment. I would fain believe, that this consciousness, this recollection of earthly friends and their true interests, if so that part of the parable may be construed, is not impossible:—is not even improbable. Love is the moving spirit of Christianity! That pure and kindly feeling which knits man to man, and leads us to see in our fellow creature a brother, a fellow pilgrim, the creation of the same Creator, the partaker of the same hope in the Redeemer, the living habitation of an immortal soul treading the same path with us, through this world of trial to another, and a better. “A new commandment give I unto you,” said our Saviour in His last impressive instructions

to the disciples ; “ that ye love one another. As I have loved you that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”* And if this feeling, warmed into existence by divine command, glows as it oft times does, even amid the difficulties and temptations of mortality, with a pure and steady light, not dishonourable to our better nature as beings made, originally, “ a little lower than the angels,” must we suppose that such fellowship dies with our body ? May we not rather reason more hopefully, that what is true and excellent now, becomes *perfect* when mortality has put on immortality ? Are we commanded to “ love one another” here, and shall there be cold indifference and forgetfulness of that love hereafter ? We know that the eyes of God, and of His angels, are unceasingly upon all that men say or do ; not with an uninterested, speculative view, of man in his mortal state, contending between the antagonist principles of virtue and vice, but with a benign and wakeful solicitude, with love divine and immeasurable. For “ God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all

* John xiii. 34.

who believe on Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." And again we read, "There is *joy* in heaven over every sinner that repenteth." * And shall we, when we have put off corruption and put on immortality, when our sinful nature is purified, and our imperfections are blotted out, by the merit and expiation of our blessed Redeemer, shall we cease to be sensible of those feelings which are now our duty, our privileges, as reasonable and responsible beings, or shall we not, rather, love only the more, as angels love ?

That all this may be so there is much to hope, and nothing to forbid ; and the hope at least is innocent. More than innocent, influentially useful. When the days of mourning came for one "garnered up" in the heart, how might affection picture the face and form once treasured there, radiant in approval and gladness as our better resolves prevailed, or turning slowly and sorrowfully away with averted look,

"As one who loves, and some unkindness meets,
With sweet austere composure." †

when sinful inclinations gained the mastery, and were permitted to stifle the warning sense that whispers—"Forbear !"

* Luke xv. 7.

† "Paradise Lost"—Book 9.

True it is that even such exercise of the imagination and of the affections, will require salutary control. The hallowed memory of departed friends would be unjustifiably cherished, if virtuous habits were pursued for *their* sakes, instead of springing from love and obedience to the Supreme Being, to whom alone is all prayer and praise and thanksgiving due. It is our Father, our Saviour, our Sanctifier, we must first seek to please, not His creation, however exalted in the scale of human excellence or human love.

“See thou do it not,”* said the angel to St. John, when the apostle, in awe and wonder, would have offered involuntary homage. But with this remembrance distinctly before us, no doubt the sacred feelings of affection may be often indulged to our advantage and encouragement. We may find in the recollection of those who have gone before us, *that link in the chain of thought* by which man is brought, as it were, more sensibly in communion with the spiritual world, of

* “And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then said he unto me, see thou do it not : for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book.”—*Rev.* xxii. 8.

which he is soon to be a denizen. The difficulty in entertaining so satisfactory a belief, would seem to apply to the immortal, rather than to the mortal friend. For how is it consistent, it may be asked, with angelic happiness, to witness the continued weakness and frailty of erring man? If there be joy in heaven over those who repent, it would follow that there must be grief at hardened and obstinate continuance in sin. But the reflective mind will admit that as St. Paul said to the Corinthians,* “When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things:” so may *we* say, and readily conceive, that when we become “*as the angels*” we shall put away earthly things, and shall think and understand with minds enlarged and enlightened, according to the nature of our new existence. As it is, therefore, with the angels whose happiness is perfect, so will it be with those, who, having been mortal, have put on immortality, and are made “*equal to the angels.*” The clouds which obscure human judgment will have passed away. The ways of God towards man will appear justified in our

* 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

sight. What has hitherto been inscrutable will be clearly comprehended, and in the deep and full conviction of the unerring wisdom and plenteous goodness of the Creator towards His creature we shall rather cease to love the mortal friend *who ceases to deserve that love*, than grieve at the just decrees of that omniscient Judge, of whose wisdom, and of whose loving kindness towards man, angels are the comprehending and adoring witnesses.

It is open to us, on due reflection, and by the legitimate exercise of cultivated reason, to conceive, that the position of the Christian's spirit when released by death from its present state of probation on earth, may most nearly resemble, *spiritually*, that of man as originally created, and now once more placed in unsinning communion with his Maker, like Adam before he forfeited Paradise by disbelief in God's word, and disobedience to the one simple command set before him. The Gospel reveals to us that "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15, 22.) Forgiveness, and *reconciliation*, in and through Christ and for His sake, is the Gospel picture which meets the mind's eye in no shadowy outline, but in vivid and repeated form.

“Before the foundations of the world were laid,” man’s sin was foreseen, and the means of his salvation foreordained by Divine love. (Matt. 25, 34.) “All things are of God, who hath *reconciled* us unto Himself by Jesus Christ.” “God was in Christ *reconciling* the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” (2 Cor. 5, 18, 19.) “You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He *reconciled*.” (Coloss. 1, 21.)

As therefore the erring child is, on contrition, restored to the favor of its earthly parent, so, through the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world offered by our Redeemer, does believing man stand before his Heavenly Father, *reinstated*, his sin pardoned and blotted out, “having made peace through the blood of the Cross.” The Redeemed spirit, therefore, being no longer in a state of “alienation” or “condemnation,” there *no longer exists cause* of exclusion from that Paradise which is no oriental picture, but a beautiful reality, (see Luke 23, 43, 2 Cor. 12, 4, Rev. 2, 7,) and which consequently may be looked forward to, as the *natural* home of the redeemed in Christ, until the consummation of all things.

But such reinstatement in Paradise of man's immortal nature, is clearly applicable only to the intermediate state of the soul between death and the day of resurrection, when the body also rises in incorruption, and puts on immortality. It is evident that a higher rank of existence *eventually* awaits the Christian. We *can* conceive the happiness assigned to Adam, but that which is "prepared" for those who love God, is distinctly declared to be such as "eye hath *not* seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart." We know further, that Adam did not "shine forth as the sun." He was not "as the angels," nor "equal to the angels." Therefore as these are promises certainly to be fulfilled in the Christian dispensation, it follows necessarily that our Saviour's love in opening the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers, has raised the Christian to a more exalted destiny than that appointed for the first man, so that the enmity of Satan, like "the wrath of man," has been overruled by Almighty Power and wisdom to our everlasting benefit and God's praise.

But whatever may be the abode, or the privileges graciously assigned to departed spirits, or the golden chain of thought still linking in "Peace, goodwill

towards man," the soul which has entered into its everlasting rest and that which is still cumbered with mortality, we may be definitively assured that no *visible* connection or communication is now permitted. Constant and important as communication of God's will to man has been, from the creation to the Apostolic age, by means of angels, only once is there a record of fellow beings, once mortal like ourselves, having appeared again on earth as ministering spirits. The exception I allude to is the mission of Moses and Elias at the moment of our Lord's transfiguration. The *rule* of Providence is impressively conveyed to us by our Saviour Himself when teaching the *result* of the misuse of earthly advantages in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The instructive fact is there imparted to us, that the Rich Man's entreaty that Lazarus should be sent to warn his five brethren of the state of retributive suffering awaiting them, unless they repented, was *not* complied with. And if one was not suffered to go "from the dead" among the living, on an embassy so important as the salvation of eternal souls, we may at once be satisfied that on no *less* occasion would visible agency be allowed.* "If they hear not

* And this, to my apprehension, is conclusive as to the whole question of ghostly or supernatural appearances. Strong as would

Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

I may here observe, that whoever sees not the force of this answer, will do well to pause and consider in what more fitting manner than by Holy Scripture, the evidence of things unseen could be communicated to mankind. Would it be consistent with what we comprehend of creation, governed as it is by one general law, to expect individual interposition? Were miraculous manifestation granted to one man, because

seem to be the leaning of mankind towards such belief, and many as are the tales afloat, more or less congenial to the capacities, or accidental prejudices of some, to this test must such records be brought. *Can the spirits of the dead appear on earth without divine permission?* We have here before us, a lesson clear in the instruction it conveys, that no such permission will be given, to which is added a reason why, that reason being, that we have already information adequate to the duties we have to perform. If, then, God be omnipotent, and as such, suffers not a departure from the usual course of His providence, even to warn an immortal soul of its danger, who can feel satisfied in imagining that, for objects so purposeless and trifling, or, at least, temporary, as those we hear of, the direct and especial interposition of supernatural and visible agency is probable or possible? That which is supernatural is, in other words, miraculous, and miracles, which were considered fitting means of impressing on men's minds the power of God, and of attesting the presence on earth of His blessed Son, ceased with the mighty object that called them forth, and with the establishment of the gospel. Phantoms doubtless there are, but the tale they tell is of the deranged condition of our bodily functions; and the warning they give, is of the necessity of having prompt recourse to medical advice. Those who entertain any doubt upon this subject will do well to refer to Dr. Hibbert's able Treatise on Apparitions.

his understanding refused to be convinced by testimony satisfactory to others, the same must in justice be granted to all. And as men's minds are differently constituted, there must in this case, be a daily recurrence of miracles suited to each man's caprice or degree of scepticism. This, I need not say, involves at once a contradiction of terms, for miracles could no longer be called miracles which were of constant occurrence, and thus, ceasing to be unusual, they would cease to be impressive, and therefore fruitless.

The more we give this subject our calm consideration, the more shall we be convinced, that as there is one sun to shine upon the physical world, so is there one light most fittingly vouchsafed to the intellectual world, in that book of divine truth, the Bible, which "is given by inspiration of God," which is open to all, and intelligible to every capacity, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

To return to our subject. Are there those who would declare it vain to reason on matters too high for adequate perception, and on which no positive law has been laid down? To them I would say, that such

enquiry, guarded from presumption, and keeping still the sacred page before us, has in it the elements of true wisdom rather than idle theory. Is it not to be reasonably hoped that the mind dwelling on the promises of God, and meditating on the condition and attributes of beings in a more exalted state of existence, becomes more fitted itself, for such state, by the insensible operation of high and purifying thoughts habitually suggesting themselves? In proportion as we seek to comprehend the happiness of futurity, shall we not be led to feelings of deeper, more conscious love to the giver of such happiness, *happiness placed within the reach of all*? Where love and gratitude are due, even on earth, do we not desire to please, and seek occasions for pleasing, and do we not fear to offend? And shall we not, therefore, be daily more careful that we “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God?”* Will not vice become hateful to us? Shall we not “cease to do evil and learn to do good?” Are the temptations of the world so easy of resistance that we should neglect any safeguard? In what manner is the natural fear of death to be best overcome, and its near approach met with the steady

* Ephes. iv. 30.

eye and calm smile of faith? Death is the penalty of sin; but believe also there is wisdom in regarding it as the "gate of life," the portal of a new and glorious existence, the contemplation of which may well cheer the dark hour of sickness and sorrow in this, and mingle the unfading ray of certain hope, even with affliction which else would bow us to the dust—This is the joy that no man taketh from us. Be our burden what it may, our appointed rest is before us, for *death is the Sabbath* of Christian man! * The dawn of Eternity's endless day of peace and happiness.

Can we forget, that although divine justice is so immutable, that mankind having sinned, their punishment was therefore inevitable, but for the voluntary sacrifice † of our blessed Saviour, yet, that this great sacrifice, this inappreciable expiation and atonement for the sins of the whole world, of all who have died and all who have yet to be born, *has been made?* "It is finished." (John 19, 30.) "Christ our Passover

* "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from His."—*Heb.* iv. 10.

† Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me that I should fulfil thy will, O my God: I am content to do it.—*Ps.* xl. 9. See also *Heb.* x. 7.

is sacrificed for us." (I. Cor. 5, 7.) "He hath borne our griefs." "He was wounded for our transgressions." "He was bruised for our iniquities." "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." (Is. 53.) "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." (I. John 2, 2.) "Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (I. Cor. 6, 11.) "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8, 1).

Can we fail to observe, that the whole tone and tenor of the sacred volume is one long and parental entreaty, that man will not throw from him the *conditions* of eternal happiness? "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God."* "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel,"† "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto

* Ezek. xviii. 23.

† Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate.”* Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did *beseech* you by us : we *pray* you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2. Cor. 5, 20.) Not only is compassion, *indeed* divine compassion, thus unweariedly earnest in seeking to touch man’s stony and insensible heart, but our Saviour and the apostles have sought to win, as it were, the Christian to his own interest, by such representation of the promises made in the gospel, as seemed most fitting, most vividly striking to human understanding and feeling. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king who made a *marriage* for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden, to the *wedding*.” “Come unto the marriage.”† Again, “A certain man made a *great supper*, and bade many ; and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come for all things are now ready.”‡ In the Revelation of St. John xix. 9, we read “Blessed are they which are called to the *marriage supper* of the Lord.” And again by the

*Matt. xxiii. 37.

† Matt. xxii. 2.

‡ Luke xiv. 16.

same inspired writer is heaven likened to “A *bride* adorned for her husband.”

Can language go further in parable or expression to show how the Christian is invited, is bidden, to the happiness of a future life—happiness thus pictured as all that is pleasing and joyous and beautiful to our apprehension; the feast of affection; a prospect to rejoice at, as a bridegroom at the appearance of his bride adorned for her husband? Why fear death, when death is so full of promise? Death should be fearful only to the wicked! Perfect love casteth out fear.

“But we *are* wicked, it will be replied; we have *not* on the wedding garment of love to our God and pleasure in His law. We are sensible of our own sinfulness, of our too imperfect obedience! Well we may be. Well may each man say “God be merciful to me a sinner.” *Are we unworthy?* The answer is obvious. Doubtless we are, and must ever be. The most rigid performance of our respective duties, could never avail for our justification before God. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1, 8.) “Enter not into

judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Psalm 143, 2.) Happily for us, it is not our own, but the worthiness, and all-sufficiency of Christ, that we are bidden to look up to for safety. We are taught to plead, as our hope, not *our* merits, but *His*; and we learn that these are "imputed" to us, by faith in His righteousness. "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," (Rom. 3, 22.) "Therefore," again writes St. Paul, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access, by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5, 1, 2.) Are we unwilling to contemplate futurity because we are already happy? Let us be grateful to God for that happiness, and show our sense of it by the endeavour to diffuse, and share it among all within our sphere. This is to add to our enjoyment, and to prove our recollection of its source. But we may patiently and thankfully abide our appointed time, without *prefer-
ring* the present to the future, and forgetting all that the Christian holds in prospect. St. Paul's teaching

on this point is applicable to *every* Christian. He writes to the Corinthians thus—"Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." "We are willing *rather* to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (2 Cor. 5, 6 and 8.) And he adds, in addressing the Philippians,—“I am in a strait betwixt two, having a *desire* to depart and be with Christ, *which is far better*: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil. i. 21, 23, 24.) What, on reflection, is human happiness, all that wealth, or power, or affection can give, to that which awaits “the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven?” There is want of faith, we may fear, in such unwillingness, for on earth are we not ever craving something more than we have, be that what it may? proving therefore if our minds were really and thoroughly convinced on the subject of future happiness, there would be no shrinking back, but rather a hopeful, though humble, looking forward. There is forgetfulness also of precept, again and again enjoined, that our regard is not to be fixed on earthly things. “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the*

*lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”**

If our view of futurity were less vague, more like the practical sense which attends this world's busy hopes and fears, hope would predominate in reference to the future, as it does in all that spurs us onward in our present state. And for what do men turn away from hope so sublime? Is it that they may revel in the career of self-indulgence? Are they the happier? Is there not an example on record of one, the wisest of his race, whose wisdom became foolishness; who possessed all that earth has to give of splendour and power and boundless wealth; all that the voluptuary can imagine of sensual pleasures? What said he?

“I said in mine heart, go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad: and of mirth, what doeth it? I sought in mine heart

* 1 John ii. 15.

to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom ; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works ; I builded me houses ; I planted me vineyards : I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits ; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees : I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house ; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me : I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces : I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, and I withheld not my heart from any joy ; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do : and, behold, *ALL WAS VANITY* and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit, under the sun.”*

* Eccle. ii.

Can the force of words go beyond this description of a satiated spirit? And these are the words of Solomon! After this, shall we hesitate to ask the man of the world, so called, be he whom he may, who passes for the gayest and happiest of earth's children, how, in his secret heart, stands his account of earthly enjoyment? Does he there find no echo, reluctantly confessed, that all is vanity? No sense of constantly recurring disappointment in the result of his best contrived schemes of pleasure; no weariness; no restless craving after "some new thing" to stimulate the apathy of a jaded and enervated mind? And if such be the sad truth in the midst of his outward seeming of joyousness and smiles, how is it when misfortune, sickness, and death—death which comes to all—close the chapter? Alas! we *know* how it is.

Contrast this picture with that of the single minded Christian,—single-minded, because the law of God is in his heart,—the one unfailing guide of his path through life. Is that path fortunate? he knows to whom all is due, and is humble while he is grateful. Is he visited with the cares and trials which are common to man? he remembers that no evil can befall him but by Divine permission; that "sweet are the

uses of adversity." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes."* "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not,"† "We are chastened that we be not condemned."‡ "No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."§ Thus he meditates, and is comforted. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."§ The Saviour of the world was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;"¶ and shall man be exempt? A momentary yielding to human infirmity there may be, for who is perfect? "No, not one!" But again rises the Christian's soul from its dust; the shadows of mortality pass away from his mind; and, through the heavy gloom of temporary suffering, beams the pure and steady light of eternal reward on his intellectual eye. In the lofty hopes permitted him by his Creator, he finds "*that peace which the world cannot give.*" The love of God shed abroad in his heart, excludes not human love, but

* Ps. cxix. 71. † Heb. xii. 7. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 32. § Heb. xii. 11.
 § Ps. xxx. 5. ¶ Is. liii. 3.

while it tempers, gives rather a quickened and more lasting and enduring character, to the kindly affections of life; and not to the affections only, but to those active duties of society, whether public or private, in the faithful discharge of which the welfare of others is involved. Cheerful and happy in the consciousness of an honest endeavour to perform those duties to the best of his power, he "uses the world as not abusing it."* His love is without dissimulation; his words are true; and his dealings just; he judgeth not, that he may not be judged; he forgives and is merciful, that he may receive mercy. For him there is no constantly present fear of death; no hand writing on the wall; no sword of Damocles suspended over his head by a single hair, marring with sickening apprehension his hours of social and cheerful enjoyment. That thought which brings fear to others gives *hope* to him, and he is ever ready, humbly but trustingly, to say "Lord now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace."

And shall we not, therefore, in pure conviction, choose this better course, the end of which is heaven

* 1 Cor. vii. 31.

itself? Shall we not commit ourselves wholly and unreservedly unto One who so careth for us; really and unfeignedly, "giving up ourselves to His service," resolved that by God's help no present temptation to evil shall lead us to forget the future good? Do we halt between two opinions? Is it not reasonable, that He who made the heart, should call that heart, its affections, and its duty His own? If there be some sacrifice apprehended, in the straight path to eternity, think how short that path may be, and what rest and joy await its close. Are difficulties imagined in regulating our daily intercourse with the world, with reference to our eternal, not temporal interests, are we not promised aid more than needful for present encouragement, and future reward for every sacrifice, beyond our conception even? *The record of divine truth from the creation of man, presents one scene of boundless love, long suffering, forbearance, forgiveness!* We may not sin that such grace may abound, but we cannot but feel, that while "The letter (of the law) killeth, the spirit (of mercy) giveth life.* Distrust of our ability to obey faithfully that law is natural, but let us take heed that self-exuse go not

* 2 Cor. iii. 6.

too far. Let us not be likened unto those who,
*“ With one consent began to make excuse. The first
 said unto Him, I have bought a piece of ground, and
 I must needs go and see it. And another said, I have
 bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them, I
 pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have
 married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”**

Let not this type of human blindness and folly, find
 its original in ourselves. *“ All can do their best,
 while it is, or should be, our consolation, that God
 reads the heart. “ If there be first a willing mind, it
 is accepted according to that a man hath, and not
 according to that he hath not.”†* Not one erring
 thought corrected, not one evil wish repressed, not
 one temptation resisted, one sinful indulgence re-
 frained from, lest by its commission we should offend
 our heavenly Parent and Benefactor, not one triumph
 of our better and nobler nature over the humiliating
 inclinations that arise within us, but is seen and
 understood to our everlasting comfort. We know
 that the day must come, when all that we have done
 on earth will pass in uncompromising review before
 our awakened recollection : that then to our own clear
 comprehension, free from the veil of self-deception,

* Luke xiv. 18.

† 2 Cor. viii. 12.

the actions of our past life will be brought in judgment before us for good or evil. In that great day, when the unerring wisdom, and long-suffering goodness of God will appear as manifest to us, as our own blind, rebellious, and ungrateful course, may it not be some little source of comfort to the soul, bowed down in shame and remorse, to find, if but one bright spot in that dark account, some record of sins repented of, and trials submitted to with unwavering faith and constancy? And then, too, with what intense thankfulness and adoration, must sinful man look up to that Being, in whose awful presence he stands—Who, knowing our weakness, and pitying our infirmity, has cast into the scale of Almighty justice, the vast offering of His own perfection and expiation, to out-weigh the evil of a guilty world! Then how blessed will be those words, “*I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins, return unto me for I have redeemed thee.*”* “*Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.*”† “*Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world :*

* Isa. xlv. 22.

† Isa. xliii. 1.

for I was an hungered and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger and ye took me in ; naked and ye clothed me ; I was sick and ye visited me ; I was in prison and ye came unto me. Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” “ Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”*



CHAPTER III.

"How many blessed groups this hour are bending,
Thro' England's primrose meadow paths, their way
Towards spire and tower midst shadowy elms ascending,
Whence the sweet chimes proclaim the hallowed day.
The halls, from old heroic ages gray,
Pour their fair children forth; and hamlets low,
With whose thick orchard blooms the soft winds play,
Send out their inmates in a happy flow,
Like a free vernal stream. I may not tread,
With them, those pathways—to the feverish bed
Of sickness bound: yet, oh! my God! I bless
Thy mercy that with Sabbath peace hath filled
My chastened heart, and all its throbbing stilled
To one deep calm of lowliest thankfulness."

THE SABBATH SONNET.—MRS. HEMANS.
(*Her last.*)

"Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens."—*Psa.* cxxiii.

"Open thou mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law."—*Psa.* exix. 18.

We have seen in the texts that have been considered, with what sure trust we may believe, that "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." Secondly, that the Christian who is "faithful unto death," closes his eyes on this world only to open them at once, "to-day," in the presence of the

spirits of just men made perfect : there to await in safety, repose, and happiness beyond human conception, the re-union with the body at the last day. In this state we have seen, thirdly, that there will be identity of person ; and, fourthly, that even as our Saviour ceased not to be recognized by His disciples while surrounded by light and glory at His transfiguration, so in calm reason may we conclude, that our own natural recognition will be as certain, when rejoining those in Paradise who have gone before us ; where, as our Saviour has declared, “ Many shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.”

How full of wonder, and of sublime hope, are these promises ! Among that “ many ” must there not be present, not those only with whom earthly affection yearns to be re-united, but all who were the great and good in old time. The first-born of the earth, the prophets, the patriarchs, the apostles, the martyrs, with “ a multitude of the heavenly host ! ” Will not the song of triumph be there, at dangers passed, no more to be encountered ; at pardon received, and victory ensured once and for ever over the great arch-

enemy of God and man. In that blessed state when human passions have ceased, and the mind, pure and enlightened, expands to a full conception of heavenly things, what exquisite happiness will there not be, in the love and fellowship of angels and ministering spirits, with whom we are made "equal," and from whom we may learn, in hours of peaceful contemplation, all we would know of the mighty past, and of all that is yet to come. Well and profitably may we *now* devote the utmost powers of the mind to such meditation, for thus shall we best acquire courage to resist "the evil that does so easily beset us," and become "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know our labour is not in vain."* Such hope will be "as an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast."† And thus shall we be led truly to understand, how fleeting, how like the momentary sorrows of childhood, at which we smile, how little to be regarded, except as opportunities for proving our love, our faith, and our obedience, are the heaviest trials of human life.

"Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away."‡

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

† Heb. vi. 19.

‡ Job xi. 16.

But, in considering the nature of the happiness before us, *the different degrees in which that happiness may be awarded* next suggests itself for enquiry.

In this matter, reasoning only by analogy, it would be a sound conclusion to admit, that if, according to human laws and practice, punishment and reward are measured by us as in each case to us may seem just, with so much more certainty must the unerring wisdom of God be relied upon to administer "righteous judgment." "Shall mortal man be more just than God?" When the sons of Zebedee ignorantly besought our Saviour, that the one might sit on the right and the other on His left hand in His glory,* they are answered "To sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine *to give*, but for whom it is prepared." Hereby confirming our preconception of divine justice. Here we understand, not our Saviour's want of *power*, for He Himself declares "The Son quickeneth whom He will." "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son."† But that God will not grant reward according to the self-estimation and vain expectation of men, for "there is no respect

* Mark x. 37.

† John v. 22.

of persons" with Him: His judgment can be given only according to the immutable principles of everlasting truth and equity.

Numerous are the texts bearing upon this subject. Without presuming to determine whether the passage "In My Father's house are many mansions,"* may signify the ample reward provided, or the varied and suitable distinctions which will be found "prepared" for the blessed; we read "God will render to every man *according* to his deeds."† "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, *according* to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."‡ He which soweth sparingly, *shall reap sparingly*; and he which soweth bountifully, shall *reap also bountifully*.|| "Every man shall receive *his own* reward *according to his own labour*."§ "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for *great* is your reward in heaven."¶ "He shall be called *least* in the Kingdom of Heaven."** "It shall be *more* tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah."†† And "It shall be *more* tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for

* John xiv. 2. † Rom. ii. 6. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 10. || 2 Cor. ix. 6.
§ 1 Cor. iii. 8. ¶ Matt. v. xii. ** Matt. v. 19. †† Matt. x. 15.

you.’* “Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water, only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he *shall in no wise lose his reward*,”† So also in the parable of the ten servants (Luke xix. 17), who, receiving each their pound, were rewarded, respectively, with the rule over *ten* cities, and *five* cities, as they had been more or less “diligent and faithful” in turning that pound to advantage in their Master’s service.

That distinction and degree, both of reward and punishment, awaits us, seems beyond all question, and not only does it appear right, but even hopeful and consolatory that it should be so. For who does not feel, that for all to receive an equal reward with those whose lives have been one scene of trial faithfully borne; of active love and beneficence to their fellow creatures unceasingly exercised, is more than even hope dare contemplate. It is, as it were, soothing to our own sense of unworthiness, to remember, that even the cup of cold water, given for Christ’s sake as the distinct *motive*, will not be disregarded; and to join in the fervent humility of David, “I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.”‡

* Matt. xi. 22.

† Matt. x. 42.

‡ Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

On reflection it will be observed, that the state of happiness we are thus benignly permitted to look forward to, may, in its *degree*, essentially depend on our *capacity for its enjoyment*, by previous habits of thought, and inclinations of the heart. It must be clear, that the more habitual have been the meditations of the mortal, on the noblest of all themes, one, nevertheless accessible to *all* minds; the more progressively, in our daily approach towards the eternal existence before us, the Christian becomes imbued with "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," (Heb. 12, 14,) in accordance with that important precept, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2, 5), the more congenial and intense must be his appreciation, of the love and fellowship of angels, and of the "spirits of just men made perfect." "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He (Christ) is pure." (1 John 3, 3.)

There remains only, for contemplation, the instruction given to us with regard to heaven itself, and the nature of man's felicity there.

The grounds on which it would seem open to us to understand that Paradise is not heaven, appear to me

these, first, that throughout the Scriptures, from the beautiful prayer of Solomon at the consecration of the Temple, “Hear Thou *in heaven Thy dwelling place*; and when Thou hearest, forgive,”* to the prayer of our Saviour Himself, “Our Father which art *in Heaven* ;” heaven is pointed out as peculiarly God’s throne. Farther we are informed that “No man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is (now) in heaven.”† “David is not ascended into heaven.” (Acts 2, 34.) Also at the crucifixion, our Saviour, as we have already observed, says distinctly “To day shalt thou be with me in *Paradise*.” While we cannot fail to remark, that *after* His resurrection, when He appeared unto Mary, His words are “Touch Me not *for I am not yet ascended to My Father*, but go unto my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.”‡ He had been in Paradise, but had not yet ascended to God. He had not *remained* in the grave. “It was not possible that He should be holden of Death.” “Thou wilt not leave My soul in Hell (the grave), neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to

* 1 Kings viii.

† John iii. 13.

‡ John xx. 17.

see corruption. (Acts ii, 24, 27.) Secondly, as a correlative argument for our reflection, we read, that "No man hath seen God at any time."* The same declaration is given in 1st Epistle of St. John, 4th ch. 12 v. Refer also to 1st Tim. vi. 16, where "The King of Kings and Lord of Lords" is shown to be "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen or can see." Also see John vi. 46, "Not that any man hath seen the Father save He which is of God, (our Saviour is here speaking of Himself,) He hath seen the Father." And again Matt. xi. 27, "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son *will* reveal Him."

Therefore, as we thus learn that heaven is God's dwelling place, so far as such a term is applicable to a divine being, one of whose attributes is omnipresence; as no man hath ascended up to heaven; as no man hath seen God, or approached the light in which He dwells; as Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and of course the faithful of all ages who are equally God's children, are now living and in a state of happy

* John i. 18.

existence somewhere ; as in the parable of Dives, Abraham is represented by our Saviour as receiving Lazarus into *Paradise* ; as He Himself expressly declares his intended presence in *Paradise* at the hour of His death, and on his re-appearance on earth declares that He has *not yet* ascended unto God ; it would seem to follow, on evidence as nearly approaching to demonstration, as so abstract a point may well permit, that *Paradise* is not heaven.

Nothing can be without interest and importance that is eternal, and the distinction between *Paradise* and Heaven makes clear, what otherwise might appear conflicting testimony, as to our immediate re-existence in another form, when released by death from that which we now occupy ; and those texts which speak of the resurrection at the last day. It may thus be clearly and satisfactorily comprehended, that *Paradise* is the happy abode of the spirits of the just, and of the redeemed, while in a state of separation from the body ; and that heaven will be the Christian's eventful and still more blessed reward, when, at the great day of resurrection of all that are in the grave, man's *body* will be raised in incorruption, to be re-united to the spirit, in form fashioned like unto Christ's.

glorious body. So fashioned, but still known as the same (Job xix. 26, 27), even as the produce of seed sown in the ground is known on its reproduction, whether plant, or flower, or tree, though the original seed has perished. I pause not a moment to anticipate difficulty or doubt on this point, it being obvious that God, who created man after His own image, can re-create him when and in what manner it seemeth good to Him.*

It is probably left to us to comprehend, that it is at this moment of the re-union of man's body and soul, that the *perfection* of immortal felicity is attained; that then it is, man "sees" his God (1 John, iii. 2), and in seeing becomes conscious of a new and blissful state of being, unknown, unthought of before; "*shining forth as the sun,*" in raiment "*white as the light,*" and in heavenly companionship with the angels who have loved and watched over us through our earthly pilgrimage.

All description fails us here, unless we may receive the Revelation of "St. John the Divine," as intended

* 1 Cor. 15. Consult this whole chapter.

to bring down to our mortal perception the glory of heaven, "the things which shall be hereafter" (Rev. i. 19), that filled his own inspired mind. We know not in what degree, if any, earthly things may be made after the image of heavenly things, as the creature after the Creator.

The sublime Milton writes,

"What if earth

Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein

Each to other like, more than on earth is thought."^{*}

This, however, we may be assured of, that the beauty and magnificence described in the latter chapters of the Book of Revelation, were intended

"By likening spiritual to corporeal forms,"

to raise human conception to its highest flight in meditating on that which is to come. We know also that *there*, all that is evil in this world, is for ever shut out; "There shall in no wise enter in anything that defileth" (Rev. xxi. 27); and *that* reflection alone, opens a wide field for thought. Examining our position as we now exist, the simple removal of the acknowledged drawbacks from human contentment, would, of its own negative force, increase almost beyond imagination all that we already so imper-

^{*} Paradise Lost. Book v.

fectly enjoy. Take away "pride, vain glory and hypocrisy, envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness," the pomps and vanities and deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil; lightnings and tempest, sickness, cold, and hunger," strife, murder, death: then might our body, no longer subject to decay, be renewed in perpetual youth and beauty. The mind left free to expand in wisdom and knowledge, life might be one long holiday, each man rejoicing in the sunshine of peace, of ease, and happiness, after his own will and disposition.

Thus might we pursue, in imagination, boundless schemes of possible felicity, such as this world's experience would suggest, and wonderful would the possibility of such visions being realized appear to us. But how does such wonder serve as a stepping stone only, to higher conceptions, or rather hope. How does all that imagination can present, fade before the distinct declaration, that the happiness "prepared for them that love God," is such as "hath not entered into the heart of man" even to conceive.

Such is heaven as offered by God to man.

Christian Believer! It has been my earnest and anxious endeavour, so far as cheerful labour and re-

search have enabled me, to awaken attention, or to confirm your courage, by truths full of comfort and gladness. I have shewn how much our religion may be viewed as one essentially of love, rather than of fear, and how immeasurably its promises exceed any object man can set before him, as the end of exertion and pursuit.

But far, very far, from my purpose is it, while reminding you of the inestimable prize before us, to lead you into false security, or to picture the path to eternity as one strewn only with flowers. It is rarely, even in this life, that the condition or advantage we covet as most desirable, is won without real effort, self denial, and steady determination; why, then, are we to expect, that a state of existence, so full of all that should ennoble the mind as we approach it, and which is so transcendently beyond our deserts and hopes when obtained, should be ours without a struggle?

But it may be ours!

All, all depends upon our own individual resolution. None can hinder us, none can help us, none but God. By which I mean, that none can bar against us the

gates of everlasting life ; neither can any save us, God alone excepted. " No man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him, for it cost more to redeem their souls." (Psalm 49, 7 8.) Our strength and security rest in His arm and His aid. " The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deut. 33, 27.) " He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. (Ps.103.) And thus spake Divine lips, " Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." (Luke 11, 9 13.) We know that from God do proceed all holy desires, all good counsels, and and great is the comfort of these words, for thus we are, as it were, in possession of direct assurance, whenever holy thoughts arise in the heart, that His spirit is there, remembering us, and aiding us to attain and maintain a frame of mind, firm against the craft and subtilty, the wily suggestions and temptations of our great arch enemy, which are unceasingly assailing us through the means of man's vanity and pride, and the

passions natural to fallen man. With utter distrust, therefore, of our own strength, and implicit faith in His word who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee," (2 Cor. 12, 9,) "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," (Heb. 13, 15,) we may be cheered by the remembrance that while "they which run in a race, run all, but *one* receiveth the prize," the race before us is for an "incorruptible crown," which *every one may* obtain "if he faint not."

We must press on to the prize of our high calling, till the Sabbath of death brings rest from our labour.

If, like the keeper of the prison, who fell down before Paul and Silas, you ask, "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?" The answer is in your Bible, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* Humble thy heart to receive with the pure affection of a child the holy truths in that book of glad tidings. Therein only is safety. There your only infallible guide. There you will read, "If any lack wisdom let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."† "Do we look for the true motives on which

* Acts xvi. 31.

† James i. 5.

all our actions should be founded, there do they appear before us. Every thing that can reconeile us to a variable world, and comfort a desponding heart, may there be met. If our faith in this revelation be firm, and firm it cannot but be if we dispassionately consider it, a prospect will open to our view which will recompense our severest sufferings, and the genial dew of heaven will gently fall on our grateful bosoms."* There need be neither presumption nor want of humility in our hopes of Hereafter. It is rather the reasonable fruit of faith, that believing in the happiness promised to man on certain conditions, purchased by the sacrifice of Christ, through God's eternal love and merey, we should look forward joyfully and trustingly, while we await patiently and cheerfully our appointed time.

And most preeious to all should be the encouragement and remembrance of this fact, that God, the Fountain of *truth* as of merey, *would not have held out to frail man a reward not to be obtained*: would not have said "*lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,*" if, by reason of the infirmity of our nature, the task

* Brewster.

had been beyond our strength—that strength which is freely and mercifully given to all who truly ask it. The rich, the poor, the learned, the simple, without respect of persons, may be all and equally the children of God and the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, unless they cast their birthright from them. Scriptural authority for thus believing is peculiarly clear and forcible. “There is no respect of persons with God,” writes St. Paul. (Rom. 2, 11.) And as touching the Christian’s birthright, purchased at the price of the Saviour’s blood, the Apostle instructs us thus:—*“As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”* (Rom. 8, 14.) “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we *shall* be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is; and every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (1 John, 3, 2.)

“According as each man has the opportunity, let him do good unto all men.” * “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.” †

Let the consciousness that God unfailingly reads in our hearts the real motives of all we undertake never fade from our minds. Then will the recollection of what is due to Him, from whom no secrets are hid, have a holy, purifying, and abiding influence on our thoughts and actions. Then may we cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us, and trust to His mercy with a cheerful, steadfast faith, for “He will abundantly pardon;” ‡ will strengthen and comfort us in the path we have been called on to tread, and will grant us the full measure of that redeeming mercy the best exertions of the best among us so truly need. Let it not be death that we fear; but lest we should grow weary in well doing, lest our resolution should relax, instead of becoming firmer and more fervent as we approach the bright and glorious eternity before us; let our prayer be made unto God for the needful aid of His Holy Spirit, and *His blessing on our en-*

* Gal. vi. 10.

† Ephes. iv. 30.

‡ Is. lv. 7.

deavours, and He will hear us, for thus it is written, "He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry, when He shall hear it He will answer thee."* "And it shall come to pass, before they call I will answer, and whilst they are yet speaking, I will hear."† "Thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, *with him also* that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."‡

"Brethren and friends," thus also writes St. Paul, "may the God of all hope fill you with all joy, and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit."||

And "may He who is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,"§ have mercy upon all for His sake "who gave Himself a ransom for all."

FINIS.

* Is. xxx. 19.

† Is. lxy. 24.

‡ Is. lvii. 15.

|| Rom. xv. 13.

§ Jude.

